

1.0 Introduction

This Environmental Impact Report (EIR) addresses the environmental impacts likely to result from the subdivision of property and construction of residences approximately one and one-half miles north of the Auburn city limits, just east of State Route 49 in Placer County. The Project description is provided in Section 2.0 of this EIR, Project Information. The Project would include the subdivision of an 18.5-acre property into 114 residential lots, the construction of single-family residences on each lot, installation of supporting infrastructure, and the eventual long-term occupation of the residences.

Project Background

The Project site is located within the boundaries of the *Auburn/Bowman Community Plan* area. This area has rapidly developed during the relatively recent past, with former rural residential and agricultural properties being converted to urban residential, commercial, and public land uses, though some of the area remains in open space. The Community Plan implements the General Plan within its boundaries and establishes goals, objectives, and policies to guide the physical development of the area, including the Project. An EIR analyzing the environmental effects of the build out of the *Auburn/Bowman Community Plan* area was also prepared and certified by the County. Previous development applications for this property, some of which were the basis for previous CEQA documents by the County, have since been withdrawn.

Purpose of the EIR

This Draft EIR has been prepared by the County of Placer (the County), in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State CEQA Guidelines, as well as the County's Environmental Review Ordinance.¹ As provided in Section 15121(a) of the CEQA Guidelines, this Draft EIR is intended to serve as an informational document that will:

...inform public agency decision-makers and the public generally of the significant environmental effects of a project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the Project...

Section 15378 of the CEQA Guidelines defines a "project" as the whole of an action, which has the potential to result in either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. The term "project" refers to the activity that is being considered for approval and that may be subject to several discretionary approvals by governmental agencies.

Prior to approving the proposed Project, pursuant to Section 15091 of the CEQA Guidelines, one or more of the following findings must be made for each significant environmental effect identified through the Draft EIR process:

- Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the Project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the final EIR.
- Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of another public agency and not the agency making the finding. Such changes have been adopted by such other agency or can and should be adopted by such other agency.
- Specific economic, social, or other considerations make infeasible the mitigation measures or project alternatives identified in the final EIR.

In addition, Section 15093 of the CEQA Guidelines requires that the decision makers balance the benefits of proposed projects with their environmental effects. If the benefits of a Project outweigh the unavoidable adverse effects, the environmental effects may be considered acceptable and a statement of overriding considerations would be adopted.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15004 stipulates that EIRs should be prepared as early as feasible in the planning process to enable environmental considerations to influence project design. To the extent possible, the EIR process should be combined with the existing planning, review, and project approval process used by each public agency (CEQA Guidelines Section 15080). Consequently, this Draft EIR is completed prior to formal consideration by the County of the Project, ensuring an opportunity to develop Project design alternatives and other measures which would minimize the potential adverse environmental effects associated with the Project.

In accordance with State law, the EIR is subject to a public review and comment period, beginning with the circulation of the document to all responsible, trustee, or other interested State, federal, and local agencies. The availability of the EIR and specified review period is noticed in the manner prescribed by law to afford the public knowledge of the review process and access to the environmental document. During this review period, written comments regarding the environmental aspects of the Project are submitted to the Lead Agency. This review and comment period allows the public and interested agencies the opportunity to participate in the environmental review process.

Following the review period, comments received, whether written or oral, are evaluated and a written response is prepared. These comments and responses are incorporated into the Final EIR, along with a list of all persons, organizations, and agencies commenting on the Draft EIR. The County may then certify that the Final EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA and that the information contained in the Final EIR was reviewed and considered prior to making a decision on the Project. Along with the necessary findings, the County will adopt a mitigation monitoring and reporting program (see **Appendix K**). This program is required by law to ensure that mitigation measures deemed necessary and feasible by the Lead Agency are implemented. Adoption of a mitigation monitoring and reporting program is independent of the EIR certification process.

Previous Environmental Analysis

Placer County General Plan and EIR

Placer County last adopted a comprehensive General Plan and General Plan EIR in 1994. The General Plan is a State-mandated document that is required to contain seven elements: Land Use, Circulation, Open Space, Conservation, Safety, Noise, and Housing (The Housing Element is typically adopted and maintained separately from the other General Plan elements, but is considered part of the General Plan). The Placer County General Plan also includes a Recreational and Cultural Resources Element, a Public Facilities and Services Element, and an Agricultural and Forestry Resources Element. Elements contain goals, policies, and programs that represent the character of growth desired by the community and provide guidance to development. The General Plan requires that all development is consistent with its goals, policies, and programs and is subject to site development and design review to ensure consistency. Policies in the General Plan are implemented through actions taken by the County's Planning Commission and the County Board of Supervisors. The General Plan EIR is a programmatic document that considers the environmental impacts of implementation of the General Plan at a general and countywide level. Impacts specific to individual development projects would be subject to project-level environmental analysis. The General Plan and EIR are considered where relevant in the various sections of this EIR.

Auburn/Bowman Community Plan and EIR

The *Auburn/Bowman Community Plan* and EIR were adopted in 1994. The *Community Plan*, like the County General Plan, sets forth goals, policies, and implementation programs that guide future development within the *Community Plan* area. The goals, policies, and programs in the *Community Plan* are adopted to implement the goals of the County General Plan at this more specific geographic level. Like the General Plan EIR, the *Community Plan* EIR is a programmatic document. The *Community Plan* and EIR are considered, where relevant, in the various sections of this EIR.

Previous Environmental Analysis

The Project site was the subject of a 1993 EIR (State Clearinghouse #92102009) that addressed the potential environmental impacts of development and operation of a Wal-Mart, the application for which was withdrawn. There were several technical studies prepared in support of the 1993 EIR, as well as additional environmental information for another subsequently withdrawn project, "Blue Oaks Apartments," that were referenced as a part of this EIR.

Scope and Methodology

The County has determined that the proposed Project could have a significant effect on the environment and that an EIR is necessary.

To assist the County in determining the scope of analysis for the EIR, a Notice of Preparation (NOP) with a preliminary project description was sent to the State Clearinghouse and to various

responsible and trustee agencies. A copy of the Notice of Preparation is contained in **Appendix A** of this document, (along with the initial study) along with a list of responsible and trustee agencies to which these documents were sent. Several organizations/agencies submitted responses to the NOP to the County prior to the close of the review period, which was May 27th, 2005. These responses are also contained in **Appendix A**.

This Draft EIR analyzes the potential effects of site preparation, construction, and operation of the Project, including direct effects of the Project, as well as reasonably foreseeable indirect effects and cumulative and growth-inducing effects. The following is a summary description of the environmental topics addressed in this Draft EIR, based on the requirements of CEQA and comments received in response to the NOP.

- **Aesthetics.** Addresses visual impacts of the proposed Project, including the effects of site grading, building construction, nighttime illumination and daytime glare on viewsheds, area visual resources, and designated scenic resources.
- **Air Quality.** Addresses the direct and cumulative effect the Project will have on the air quality of the Project vicinity and the Placer County portion of the Sacramento Valley Air Basin.
- **Biological Resources.** Addresses the impacts on the diversity and number of plant and animal species that may be present on-site, threatened and endangered plants and wildlife, jurisdictional wetlands, habitat deterioration, and relationship to any adopted conservation plans.
- **Cultural Resources.** Addresses potential impacts the Project may have on known and unknown prehistoric and historical resources.
- **Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources.** Addresses geotechnical impacts associated with site development, including changes in topography, soil erosion, geologic and seismic hazards, and potential loss of mineral resources.
- **Land Use, Planning, Population, and Housing.** This section describes the Project's relationship with policies that have been adopted with the intent of reducing potential environmental impacts of land development projects, such as the Bohemia Subdivision Project. In addition, the effects of the Project related to population growth and housing in the vicinity are examined.
- **Noise.** Addresses the level of noise generated during construction and by operation of the proposed Project, as well as the effect of the existing noise environment on the future residents of the Project.
- **Public Services, Public Utilities, and Recreation.** This section addresses the impact the Project may have on the ability of the County and other service providers to maintain sufficient levels of service for police, fire, school, and recreation services, and the impact of any capacity expansions required as a result of the Project. This section also addresses the ability of public utility providers to service the uses proposed in the Project and the impact of any service or capacity extensions or expansions required as a result of the Project.

- **Safety.** Addresses impacts associated with any site contamination, release of hazardous substances, proximity to any hazards, and other safety issues associated with the Project.
- **Surface Hydrology and Water Quality.** Addresses short- and long-term changes in drainage patterns resulting from site grading, changes in absorption rates and runoff, changes in surface water quality, and quality/quantity of groundwater.
- **Transportation.** Addresses direct and cumulative effects of the Project on the roadway system, vehicular circulation, transportation safety hazards, and bicycle/pedestrian circulation.
- **Project Alternatives.** Provides an analysis of viable alternatives to the proposed Project, as prescribed in Section 15126.6(a) of the CEQA Guidelines and as further described in applicable case law.
- **Cumulative and Long-Term Effects.** Provides an analysis of the cumulative impact of the Project as viewed in conjunction with other land use change in the vicinity, as well as potential irreversible changes that would occur as a result of the Project, as described in Section 15126(c) of the CEQA Guidelines.

Requested Entitlements

As defined by CEQA, Placer County is the Lead Agency for this Project. The Placer County Planning Commission is the decision making authority on the Project. The Board of Supervisors must certify this Draft EIR in order for the County to take action on the Project, including consideration of a General Plan Amendment, Rezone, and tentative subdivision map for subdivision of the property. Other regulatory actions related to the Project, including issuance of grading and building permits, development agreements, site plan review, and other approvals may be made by the County subsequent to the adoption of the EIR.

Subsequent to County action on the Project, other agencies may consider actions, permits, and approvals that may be necessary prior to development and operation of the Project. This Draft EIR may be used for evaluation of such subsequent actions. Following are agencies that may have jurisdiction over certain aspects of the Project:

- **Placer County Air Pollution Control District.** The District reviews land use development proposals to identify local and regional air quality impacts. Based on this review, it recommends mitigation measures, both on-site and off-site, to address identified impacts.
- **Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board.** Because ground surface will be disturbed by grading, the Project will require a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) in compliance with the “General Construction Activity Storm Water Permit” issued by the State Water Resources Control Board. Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) are also administered by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board for discharges from wastewater treatment systems, such as the one to which the Project proposes to connect.

- **California Department of Fish and Game.** The Department of Fish and Game enforces various Fish and Game codes, and has permitting authority over activities that have impacts on watercourses and certain biological resources. If an existing fish or wildlife resource may be substantially adversely affected by the activity, the CDFG may propose reasonable measures that will allow protection of those resources. If these measures are agreeable to the party, they may enter into an agreement with the CDFG identifying the approved activities and associated mitigation measures. CDFG is also responsible for enforcing the California Endangered Species Act of 1984 (CESA), CDFG is responsible for ensuring that Projects do not adversely affect a species listed as endangered or threatened under CESA (Section 2090 of the Fish and Game Code).
- **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.** The Corps regulates discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA). “Discharge of fill material” is defined as the addition of fill material into waters of the U.S., including, but not limited to, the following: placement of fill that is necessary for the construction of any structure or impoundment requiring rock, sand, dirt, or other material for its construction; site-development fills for recreational, industrial, commercial, residential, and other uses; causeways or road fills; fill for intake and outfall pipes and subaqueous utility lines [33 C.F.R. §328.2(f)].
- **Placer County Airport Land Use Commission.** The Placer County Airport Land Use Commission is responsible for reviewing airport and adjacent land use development proposals within the vicinity of the three airports in Placer County: the Auburn Municipal Airport, Blue Canyon Airport, and Lincoln Regional Airport. The Project is located within Compatibility Zone D of the Auburn Municipal Airport, as depicted in the Placer County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan. The Placer County Airport Land Use Commission will review the proposed Project to determine whether or not the Project is compatible with existing policies and requirements of the Placer County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan.

Contact Person

Comments on the Draft EIR should be addressed to Ms. Leah Rosasco, Placer County Planning Department, 3091 County Center Drive, Auburn, CA 95603.

Source References

A complete listing of source references is found in Section 6.0 of this report.

Notes and References

- ¹ Please consult <http://ordlink.com/codes/placer/ DATA/TITLE18/index.html> for more information.